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ABSTRACT

Spouses of presidents and chancellors at public colleges and universities belonging to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), were surveyed in 1981 to provide a factual basis for program discussions by spouses at future annual meetings and summer councils, and to validate some assumptions and dismiss some myths about the spouses. AASCU has had a professional program for spouses since 1974. The survey included questions dealing with description of the spouse's institution; statistics on the spouse, including the percentages of salaried or voluntary careers; housing arrangements; the host role; and the relationship of the spouse and the governing board. Of the 314 spouses who were mailed questionnaires, responses are analyzed for 42 percent. All respondents except one were female, and almost half were in the 50 to 60 age group. Responses indicated the diversity of orientations of the spouses, from those who considered being the president's spouse their full-time volunteer career to those who definitely did not. More than one-third stated that they had a salaried or paid career. Nearly two-thirds were required to live in a university-owned house. Of those not living in a university-owned house, more than half received some housing allowance. Presidents and spouses living in their own homes hosted only one-third fewer university functions than did their counterparts living in university-owned homes. Hosting services were not provided to spouses in proportion to the number of events hosted, but were related more directly to the type of housing. About one-half of the spouses felt that the board has a clear perception of the president's spouse's role and that these perceptions concurred with their own. A questionnaire is appended. (SW)

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SURVEY OF AASCU PRESIDENTIAL SPOUSES

Myths and Realities

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INTRODUCTION

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) conducted the first survey of spouses of presidents and chancellors at public institutions of higher learning in the spring of 1981. Over 345 state colleges and universities are members of AASCU, and 314 of these have a presidential spouse. The association has had a professional program for spouses since 1974, both at its annual meetings in November of each year and at its biennial summer councils. Concerns of the spouses and their institutions are the subject of discussion by their peers and by outside speakers. The survey was undertaken to identify subjects for future programming for the AASCU spouses and to introduce the spouses to themselves and to the higher education community, to the extent revealed by the statistics produced by this survey.

The surveys were mailed to 314 spouses. (A copy of the actual survey is included as Appendix A.) The survey included questions dealing with description of the spouse's institution; statistics on the spouse, including the percentages of salaried or voluntary careers; housing arrangements; the host role; and the relationship of the spouse and the governing board. The initial survey achieved a return rate of 42%. A second mailing resulted in an overall return rate of 51%. Although later responses were not received in time to be included in this analysis, they will be added to the computerized database for future reference purposes. Percentages, throughout this report, unless otherwise stated, refer to the percentage of responses for a particular questionnaire item.

As mentioned above, the specific goal of the survey was twofold: to provide a factual basis for program discussions by AASCU spouses at forthcoming annual meetings and summer councils, and to validate some assumptions and lay to rest myths about university "first ladies." Incidentally, the notion of the president's spouse as a "first lady" is one of the myths that this survey can lay to rest. At least four of AASCU's presidential spouses are men.

INSTITUTIONAL STATISTICS

In recording the spouses' geographical location of institutions and their size and type of campus, it was noted that the respondents to the survey were a fairly accurate reflection of the membership distribution of AASCU institutions. The fact that the respondents happened to be appropriately distributed from various types, sizes, etc., of AASCU institutions adds to the validity of the survey's conclusions.

Geographically, 20% of the respondents were from the East (as designated in the map following the survey instrument in Appendix B); 24% , Southeast; 27%, Midwest; and 29%, West. The breakdown by size of the institutions was about one-quarter each in institutional category: 2500 to 5000 students, 5000 to 10,000 students, and 10,000 to 20,000 students; the final quarter was almost evenly divided between small colleges, of up to 2500 students, and colleges with 20,000 students and over.

The campus identification of respondents showed about one-third of them on each type of campus: rural, suburban, and urban. About 60% of the responses were from residential campuses and the rest from commuter schools.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

All respondents save one were female. Almost half of responding spouses were in the 50 to 60 age group. No spouses under 30 responded, and only 5% of the respondents were over 60. Most had only one child at home. In the capacity of spouse of the president, the average times the respondent had moved was one. The highest number of reported moves in this position was three.

A quarter of the respondents had had the experience of changing from being a faculty or administrative spouse to becoming a president's spouse while remaining at the same institution. Past conversations with spouses at AASCU meetings have identified this as a sensitive procedure, which could result in additional pressure on the spouse. Thus, it might be an appropriate topic for a discussion program if this issue affects a sufficient number of spouses.

The number of spouses who indicated that they had a salaried career was greater than has often been assumed. More than one third (37%) of the total respondents stated that they had a salaried/paid career. The breakdown by age group shows one half of the respondents within the 30-40 category have salaried careers; over one third within the 40-50 category; and almost half within the 50-60 category. None of the respondents within the over 60 age category stated that they had a paid career. Table I shows the distribution of salaried careers by age group.

TABLE I

Respondents with Salaried Career By Age Group

Age group	Percentage of age group	Percentage of total
30-40	50	16
40-50	36	35
50-60	40	49
over 60	0	0

An unexpected result showed up in the response to the query, "Did you begin your career since becoming a president's spouse?" Although it has sometimes been thought that the spouses with salaried careers were those who had been working before becoming a president's spouse, this survey showed that while this was true for 55%, 45%, almost as many, had begun their salaried career after becoming the spouse of a college or university president.

A permutation of the salaried career variable with the enrollment size of the institution did not yield a definable trend—spouses at larger campuses

were just as likely, or unlikely, to have salaried careers as were spouses at smaller campuses.

Of the respondents with salaried careers, the majority held positions that involved some aspect of education, health care, or closely related field. However, the careers of AASCU spouses also include clinical psychology, college professorships, art, and engineering, and work as a travel agent.

Table II shows the distribution of volunteer career by age group and type. Slightly more than one-half of the spouses in each age group have a volunteer career. These spouses (in all age groups) are more likely to be involved in community related work than in university or church activities. (See percentages under "Community Volunteer Work.")

TABLE II

Volunteer Career By Age Group

Age group	% of age group	Type of Volunteer Work* university	church	community
30-40	56.2	55	22	66
40-50	64.5	64	51	97
50-60	60	47	36	89
over 60	42.8	33	33	100

*Percentages do not total 100 because many spouses participate in more than one category of volunteer work.

Comments noted in this section by respondents showed that one spouse "volunteers" as an elected school board member, several with the League of Women Voters, one election judge, two with Girl Scounts, and several others with symphony boards, hospital boards, etc. These many activities led perhaps to one spouse's comment concerning working with others, "Wherever I volunteer, I'm still the 'boss's wife'."

One spouse named entertaining, decorating, and landscaping for the university as the volunteer career. One other said, "Being the president's spouse is a full-time volunteer career!" The comments associated with this section of the survey illustrate the diversity of orientations of the AASCU presidents' spouses—from those who consider being the president's spouse their full-time volunteer career to those who definitely do not.

HOUSING AND HOST ROLE

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported they were required to live in a university-owned house, as compared to one-third who indicated they were not. Table III clearly demonstrates that spouses living in university-owned houses are overwhelmingly more likely to receive housekeeping, gardening, and general maintenance services from the university.

TABLE III

Support Services Provided By Type of Housing

Type of Housing	Type of Service Provided (in percentages)			
	Housekeeping	Cooking	Gardening	General Maintenance
University-owned	79.0	13.5	81.4	98.7
Non-university-owned	15.6	7.8	13.7	3.9

Of those not living in a university-owned house, more than half said they did receive some housing allowance, while the others were solely responsible for their housing.

The furnishing of the president's house followed a predictable pattern: 28% of those in university houses had most of their furnishings provided by the university. While those in their own homes indicated that the university provided most furnishings in the home in only 8% of the cases.

On the assumption that it is always difficult to distinguish between the duties associated with the position of the president's spouse and the reasonable expectations of any spouse in regard to domestic duties, the respondents were asked to specify whose responsibility it was to arrange for the support services for the president's house.

The survey results showed that the largest number of services for the house were arranged for by the spouses themselves, while half that number were arranged for by the university department concerned, and the remaining lesser amount were arranged through the president's office. It has been suggested that in identifying and professionalizing the volunteer career of the president's spouse, those services that aid the spouse in the discharge of duties relating to university functions or use of the house might more properly be arranged for by the university, whether through the departments concerned or through the president's office, rather than a direct, personal request by the spouse.

That the president's spouse does function on a volunteer basis for the university was even more evident in the responses to the question, "How many university functions do you host in your home per year?" Most interesting was the fact that presidents and spouses living in their own homes hosted only one-third fewer university functions than did their counterparts living in university-owned homes. The average number of functions per year was 21 for those in university-owned homes and 14 for those in their own homes. The highest number of university functions hosted in a year in the president's home was 60, or an average of five functions a month—more than one a week.

In hosting the university function in the home, the spouses indicated that the food was prepared by a combination of university service, caterers, and themselves. Statistically, however, only a small percentage were accounted

for by caterers; most food preparation was done by the university or the spouse. Predictably, those in university-owned homes were able to use university food services more often than those in their own homes; however, the number of times spouses prepared food themselves for university functions was the same, whether they lived in their own or a university-owned home. When the food was prepared by the spouse, the spouse was reimbursed for the cost in 53% of the cases.

Hosting services were not provided to spouses in proportion to the number of events hosted; rather, they were related more directly to the type of housing, as shown in Table IV.

The presidential spouses responding also indicated that in university-owned homes, the china, glassware, silverware, linens, etc., were in most part a combination of their own and the university's. A smaller number, 30%, indicated that these items were furnished entirely by the president and spouse, and only 22% had them furnished completely by the university. The picture almost reverses in the non-university owned home, where 59% of the respondents said all these items were their own, 27% said they were a combination, and only 12% said they were entirely the university's.

TABLE IV

Hosting Services Provided By Type of Housing

Type of Housing	Type of Service Provided (in percentages) Pre-Function Cleaning	Set-Up	Service during	Post-function
University-owned	65.4	72.8	85.1	77.7
Non-university-owned	13.7	33.3	49.0	29.4

In response to the question of whether the functions are those hosted by the president and spouse or by university or community groups, the overwhelming number were university functions hosted by the president and spouse. The respondents indicated that a small number of university groups held functions in the president's home and that very few community groups do so.

The question, "How many functions outside your home do you feel it is assumed that you will attend per year?" generated a whole range of comments, from "no assumptions are stated" to "too many," suggesting that spouses' perceptions of their roles in this area (if any) vary widely. It is interesting to note that some spouses feel that they control their own schedules to the extent that their attendance was "a personal decision." Other spouses however, felt that "visibility is imperative," or reported that "often I feel obligated to attend." Still others commented that "it is a privilege to attend" or "we love to attend."

Statistically, the average number of functions the president's spouse attends outside the home each year was 49, or more than four functions per month, (if averaged out over the year; however, there is likely to be a greater concentration during the traditional "academic year"). The highest number of outside functions a spouse reported attending during one year was 300!

BOARD RELATIONSHIP

Over the years, under many differing titles, the AASCU spouses have discussed their relationship with the governing boards of their institutions. Perhaps more than any other constituency, the board is the group that could most value and validate the volunteer activities of the president's spouse in the cause of advancing the university.

Boards often have quite specific expectations for a presidential spouse—based on the preceding spouse, or on a "typical" spouse, as they picture that role. However, such board expectations are rarely expressed directly. Spouses have informally discussed the role of the spouse at the interview of the candidate president: is the spouse present, does the board ask questions of her/him, does the spouse ask questions of the board regarding the role and the university support services available? No clear or immediate answer to these questions has emerged. As much as some spouses would like to know what is expected so that they may respond (positively or negatively) to the expectations and request university assistance in carrying them out, other spouses are fearful of being locked into a specific set of duties, or of refusing and thereby jeopardizing their spouse's opportunity to become president.

Like the attitudes towards attending functions, reactions to the question of the board's expectations and assumptions about the spouse's role also vary. Although there is no consensus on this issue, the perceived relationship between the spouses and the board is a sensitive one that drew forth very emphatic responses, as evidenced by the following comments:

- "I don't feel that as the spouse of a university president I have to play a role."
- "We receive no help in carrying out our role."
- "The Board wants me to look the part and make no waves."
- "It is a challenging and rewarding job."

Individual versus State Boards

For the past twenty years or so, there has been a trend to eliminate single governing boards for each institution and substitute a state board. For the purposes of interpreting this survey, it was important to divide the responses to the questions according to whether the institution had its own board, in which case there is almost always more interaction with the presidential spouse, or whether the institution was governed by a state board, with the resultant distancing between spouse and board.

Looking at the proportions generated by the responses to the board relationship and travel items, the pattern of responses from spouses operating within an individual board or state board appears to be similar:

- Roughly one-half of the spouses in either board system feel that the board has a clear perception of the president's spouse's role, and that these perceptions concur with their own.

- Those spouses in either type of board that feel the board has a clear perception of their role as the president's spouse agree that this perception is more often expressed informally, rather than formally.

However, expectations concerning spouses' travel to professional meetings differed depending on the type of board.

- Spouses with individual boards felt that they are expected to travel to professional meetings with their spouse more often; almost half (41.8%) as opposed to 23.6% for state board respondents.

- The university assumes the expense of travel more often for spouses with individual boards than for spouses in state systems. Over one-fourth of the spouses with individual boards receive travelling expenses, as compared to 8% of the spouses with state systems.

CONCLUSION

Although this is the first survey of the AASCU spouses, the association hopes to continue the survey with additional and differing questions on a biennial basis. AASCU spouses have indicated an interest and willingness to participate in ongoing surveys to update the information.

Today, with a clear indication that more presidential spouses are pursuing salaried careers, together with their efforts as volunteers in behalf of their universities, the question of expectations, results, and recognition of their efforts as the spouse of the president deserves major attention.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Roberta H. Ostar has been an observer and participant in the AASCU spouse programs since they began and has served as coordinator of the programs since 1979. She is the spouse of AASCU President Allan W. Ostar.

Cathryn Ryan, who collected and analyzed the data is a Research Associate for AASCU's Office of Research and Policy Analysis. Her professional training is in social science research methodology.

APPENDIX A

AASCU PRESIDENTIAL SPOUSE SURVEY

A. Institution Statistics

1. Looking at the attached map, circle the number which corresponds to the region in which your institution is located:

   1 2 3 4 5

2. Indicate the size of your institution per enrollment category:

   1 ( ) 1 – 199
   2 ( ) 200 – 499
   3 ( ) 500 – 999
   4 ( ) 1,000 – 2,499
   5 ( ) 2,500 – 4,999
   6 ( ) 5,000 – 9,999
   7 ( ) 10,000 – 19,999
   8 ( ) 20,000 and over

3. The campus is: 1 ( ) rural 2 ( ) suburban 3 ( ) urban

4. The campus is defined as: 1 ( ) residential 2 ( ) commuter

Additional Comments:_____

B. Individual Statistics

5. Sex: 1 ( ) Female 0 ( ) Male

6. Age Group: 1 ( ) under 30
   2 ( ) 30 – 40
   3 ( ) 40 – 50
   4 ( ) 50 – 60
   5 ( ) over 60

7. Number of children living at home: _____

8. Age/Sex of children: Child 1 _____ Child 2 _____
   Child 3 _____ Child 4 _____

9. At how many different institutions have you served as the President's spouse? _____

10. As a President's spouse, how many times have you moved from one region of the country (as specified by the enclosed map) to another? _____

11. Have you had the experience of moving from a faculty or administrative spouse to Presidential spouse, within the same institution? _____

12. Do you have a paid career? 1 ( ) YES 2 ( ) NO

13. If "YES", indicate the following:

1 ( ) Full-time 0 ( ) Part-time

Please specify: _____

14. Did you begin your career since becoming a President's spouse?

1 ( ) YES 2 ( ) NO

15. Do you have a volunteer career? 1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

16. If "YES", indicate the affiliation(s):
1 ( ) University
2 ( ) Church
3 ( ) Community
4 ( ) Other

Please specify: _____

Additional Comments: _____

C. **Housing**

17. Are you required to live in a university-owned house?

1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

18. If "YES" do you pay any rent? 1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

19. If you live in a non-university-owned house, do you receive a housing allowance? 1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

20. The house is furnished:
1 ( ) Mostly by you
2 ( ) Mostly by the university

Which of the following services are provided by the university?

21. 1 ( ) Housekeeping
2 ( ) Cooking
3 ( ) Gardening
4 ( ) General maintenance
5 ( ) Other (please specify): _____
_____

26. These services are scheduled by:

1 ( ) their own university department
2 ( ) the president's office
3 ( ) you

Additional Comments: _____

D. **Host Role**

27. How many university functions do you host in your house per year? _____

Of these events, estimate the number which:

28. You and your spouse host: _____
University groups use the house: _____
Community groups use the house: _____

29. At these functions:
1 ( ) Food and service are provided by the university
2 ( ) An outside caterer is paid by the university
3 ( ) You prepare the food

30. If you prepare the food, are you reimbursed for cost?
1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

At these functions, which of the following services are provided/ paid for by the university:

31. 1 ( ) Pre-function cleaning 2 ( ) Set-up
3 ( ) Service during function 4 ( ) Post-function clean up

32. When entertaining, the china, glass, silverware and linen are mostly:
1 ( ) Yours
2 ( ) The university's
3 ( ) Combination

33. On the average, as the spouse of a university president, how many functions outside your home do you feel it is assumed you will attend per year? _____

Additional Comments: _____

E. **Board Relationship**

34. Do you feel that the Board has a clear perception of your role as a President's spouse? 1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

35. If "YES", this expectation is expressed: 1 ( ) Formally
2 ( ) Informally

36. Does your perception of the role of a President's spouse concur with the Board's perception: 1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO
2 ( ) Partially

37. Are you expected to travel to professional meetings with your spouse? 1 ( ) YES 0 ( ) NO

38. If "YES", indicate whether: 1 ( ) the university assumes the expense
2 ( ) you assume the expense

Additional Comments: _____

APPENDIX B

CANADA
CANADA
MEXICO
Regional Code
1 = East
2 = Midwest
3 = South
4 = West